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Otepka Case Secrecy Protested by ACLU

The American Civil Liberties Union has strongly protested the secrecy of a State Department hearing on the dismissal of Otto F. Otepka, the Department's former chief security evaluator.

"The exclusion of the public in a matter of this importance does injury to two values we hold in high esteem," Lawrence Speiser, director of the ACLU's Washington office, said in a statement yesterday.

Speiser said these values are the right of the public to be informed "and the equally compelling right of the individual subject of the hearing to have the public present."

Otepka was dismissed in November, 1963, on charges that his conduct was unbecoming an officer of the State Department. He has remained on the payroll pending final disposition of his appeal.

The appeal opened two weeks ago before Edward A. Dragon, an attorney for the Agency for International Development who was appointed by the Department to serve as the hearing officer.

Speiser said that Otepka had demanded an open hearing and said "all of the documents in question already have been published by the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee."